

Section B-2 Employment Support

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact your Family Readiness Program representative or legal officer, as appropriate, to secure the most current information.

Employer Support

National Committee of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve **1-800-336-4590, Ombudsman Services**

The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is an agency within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. It was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers, and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. Today ESGR operates through a network of more than 4,500 volunteers in 54 committees located in each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The nation's Ready Reserve comprises approximately 50 percent of our total available military manpower, excluding retirees. The current National Defense Strategy states that the National Guard and Reserve, while decreasing in size, will be full partners in the Total Force. Our Reserve forces are spending more time away from the workplace defending the nation, supporting a demanding operations tempo and training to maintain their mission readiness.

The Department of Defense tasks ESGR to "...promote both public and private understanding of the National Guard and Reserve in order to gain U.S. employer and community support through programs and personnel policies and practices that shall encourage employee and citizen participation in National Guard and Reserve programs." (DoD Directive 1250.1) To focus this task, the following mission statement was developed.

ESGR Mission

The success of the nation's defense is dependent on the availability of highly trained members of the "Total Force." Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's mission is to obtain employer and community support to ensure the availability and readiness of Reserve forces. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve has a national and local organizational structure to support the following functions:

- Operate a proactive program directed at U.S. employers, employees, and communities that ensures understanding and appreciation of the role of the National Guard and Reserve in the context of the DoD Total Force Policy.
- Encourage and assist employee participation in National Guard and Reserve training programs and on military duty without civilian job impediments of any kind, to include encouraging voluntary compliance with federal and state statutes governing employment and reemployment rights of Reserve component members.
- Recruit and develop volunteer leaders at the national and local levels to promote the development of employer personnel policies and practices that accommodate and facilitate employee participation in National Guard and Reserve activities.

- Encourage interaction between National Guard and Reserve units and their communities to promote public understanding of the National Guard and Reserve and encourage partnerships between civilian organizations and military units in the community.
- Assist in preventing, resolving, or reducing employer and/or employee problems and misunderstandings that result from National Guard or Reserve membership, training, or duty requirements through information services and informal mediation.
- Assist in educating National Guard and Reserve members regarding their obligations and responsibilities to employers.
- Use the military chain of command to promote better understanding of the importance of maintaining positive working relations between employers and their Reserve component employees, in order to sustain National Guard and Reserve participation.
- Solicit the assistance of military agencies, military training schools, and military and civilian associations in educating the Reserve forces about their rights and responsibilities regarding terms and conditions of civilian employment, as stipulated in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.
- Promote civilian and military personnel management practices that encourage membership in the National Guard or the Reserve. (DoD Directive 1250.1)

ESGR Background

When the end of the draft was initially anticipated, Defense planners foresaw a potential problem with the nation's Reserve service members and their civilian employers. Long accustomed to National Guard and Reserve membership as an alternative to compulsory active-duty service, it was believed that employers might question the necessity of service in a purely voluntary military system. The planners concluded that some employers might not be supportive of their workers serving voluntarily in uniform. The Department of Defense chartered the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) over 28 years ago to:

1. Inform employers of the ever-increasing importance of the National Guard and Reserve.
2. Explain the necessity for and role of these forces in national defense.

ESGR seeks to gain and reinforce the support of America's employers for a strong National Guard and Reserve system.

Originally consisting of a small, select, volunteer panel of distinguished Americans representing business, government, labor, and military, they directed most of their efforts at their peers. It soon became apparent that this purely top-level effort was insufficient. Throughout the years, studies showed that nearly a third of the men and women surveyed about why they were leaving

the National Guard and Reserve still indicated "employment conflict" as the source of their problems.

Identifying the need to expand its outreach, the national ESGR leadership established a nationwide network of local employer support volunteers, organized in ESGR Committees within each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In this way, ESGR could bring the message to all employers, large and small, in cities, towns, and rural areas.

Today, nearly 4,500 volunteer executives, senior government representatives, educators, and military personnel serve on local Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve committees. With help and resources from the National ESGR Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, the 54 ESGR committees conduct employer support programs, including Bosslifts, Briefings with the Boss, Mission One, Ombudsmen Services, and recognition of employers whose policies support or encourage participation in the National Guard and Reserve. By explaining the missions of the National Guard and Reserve and by increasing public awareness of the role of the employer, they develop a dialogue among employers, the ESGR committees, and local National Guard and Reserve unit commanders and members. ESGR committee members also provide information to the National Chair on specific problems. This information helps point out regional or national trends that affect recruiting, retention and training of the National Guard and Reserve.